



Some tips for healthy habits that fight stress

What are the symptoms of stress?

- Chronic fatigue
- Change in appetite
- Increase in alcohol, drug, or cigarette use
- Change in bowel or bladder habits
- Body aches and pains not caused by exercise
- Change in sleeping or waking patterns
- Change in behavior or emotional patterns

Symptoms vary from person to person. Stress is a part of living that can't be avoided entirely. What you can do is change the way you adapt to stress. Here are some ways to take care of yourself – in stressful times and every day.

- Exercise for 30 minutes at least three times a week.
- Recognize the things that upset you and try to develop a positive attitude toward those you cannot avoid.
- Develop methods for relaxation; for example, talk with supportive people, listen to music, watch movies, take walks.
- Learn to use relaxation techniques, such as mental imaging, diaphragmatic breathing, and progressive muscle relaxation.
- Eat three to six small, balanced, high-fiber meals a day.
- Drink less coffee and alcohol.
- Drink four to eight glasses of water a day.
- Use positive thoughts and humor to overcome negative thoughts.
- Seek professional help for dealing with stressful events in your life.
- Have a health checkup.
- If you are overweight, talk to your healthcare provider about weight control.
- Take time for yourself.
- Join an interest group centered on a hobby, sport, or social activity.
- Simplify your life – don't try to do too much, and learn to say no.
- Be willing to resolve disputes; don't hold on to anger.
- Get adequate, regular amounts of rest and sleep (6 to 10 hours a night) – follow these tips for good sleep:
 - Establish a regular bedtime and wake-up time and stick to them even on weekends.
 - Keep light levels very low after sunset and keep the bedroom very dark.
 - Go to bed when you are drowsy and get up when you are wide awake.
 - Avoid caffeine, other stimulants, cigarettes, and alcohol.
 - Read something light or entertaining just before you go to bed, to get your mind off the day's troubles.
 - Try not to focus on falling asleep by clock watching.

These are general tips that work in many different stressful situations. For more information, call Switchboard of Miami's 24-hour crisis hotline at (305) 358-HELP.